


DAMAGE CONTROL

BADGER



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



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Badger Tracks

Walking tracks

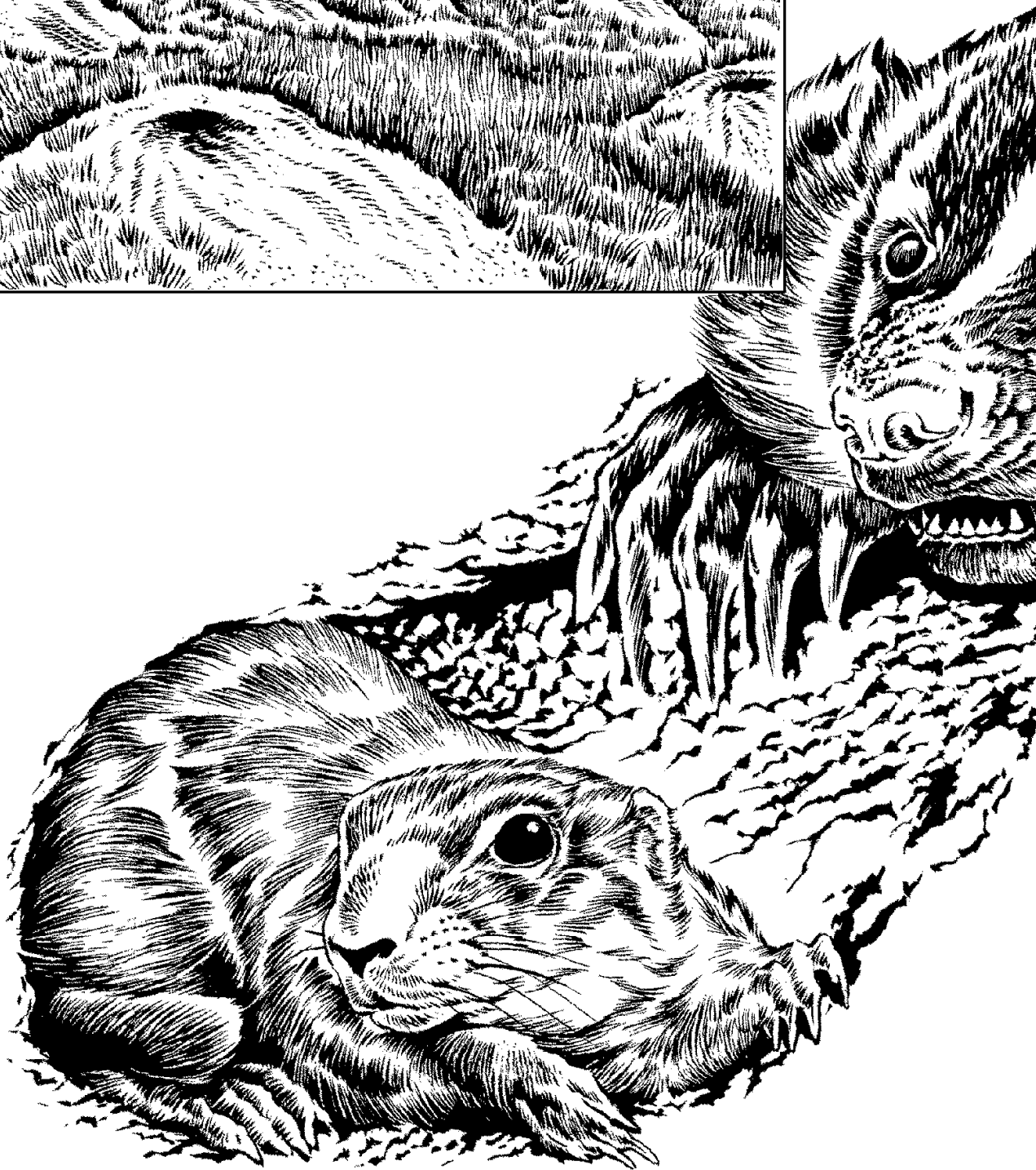


Front foot



Hind foot







The badger (*Taxidea taxus*) is a medium sized, gray animal with a white stripe reaching from near the nose to the crown of the head. Paired white areas extend from around the mouth onto the cheeks and insides of the ears, and a prominent, vertical black bar or “badge,” is located in front of each ear. The back of the ears and feet are black; the short tail is yellowish brown; the underparts are yellowish white. Badgers have 1 ¼ inch long toenails on their front feet which they use to dig out ground squirrels, gophers, mice, rats and other burrowing animals that make up most of their diet. Badgers are nocturnal and seldom seen during the day-light hours.

Badgers occur throughout much of Missouri, but are most common in the western and northwestern parts of the state. They prefer open pastures and hay fields where they commonly dig large holes in search of food.

Badgers are solitary, nomadic animals spending most of their energy traveling in search of food. They rely on permanent dens during the spring when the females bear young. Badgers travel widely and may return to a feeding area occasionally, about once every 7 to 10 days. Badgers usually spend the daylight hours in a different burrow each day.

Badgers become less active during winter when food becomes difficult to locate and the ground is often frozen for weeks at a time. Badgers store fat reserves and spend much of the winter sleeping in a burrow. They may occasionally venture out of the den during warm periods to forage.

Badgers are strictly carnivores and rely on their digging ability for most of their food. They also consume ground nesting birds, young rabbits, snakes and insects. Badgers rarely eat carrion.

Types of Damage Caused by Badgers

Badgers may cause considerable damage to hay fields, pastures, levees, pond dams, terraces, golf courses and cemeteries. The holes they dig vary from a few inches to several feet deep. Occasionally, badgers may dig their way into pens or poultry houses and kill poultry.

Because of their reputation as vicious fighters, badgers often are thought to be a threat to children or pets. Typically, however, badgers are only active during the night and do not become aggressive unless forced to defend themselves.

Badgers are sometimes confused with groundhogs, however, the two species have little in common beyond size and appearance. Badgers seldom venture close to farm buildings or near towns. Groundhogs, on the other hand, often tunnel under farm buildings or old houses, and easily adapt to living in close proximity to humans. Badgers are carnivores eating only meat; groundhogs are herbivores eating only vegetation. Badgers travel widely; groundhogs remain in the same general vicinity of their dens.

Badger Damage Prevention and Control

While not all animals fall under this provision, the WILDLIFE CODE OF MISSOURI, Rule 4.130, allows landowners to use lethal methods to protect personal property from badgers. Property owners may also contract someone to hunt or trap nuisance badgers for them. Badgers causing property damage may be removed at any time and without permit, but only by shooting or trapping except with written authorization of the Director of the Conservation Department.

Nuisance badgers captured or killed out of season may not be used, transported, sold or given away, and must be reported to an agent of the Conservation Department within 24 hours and disposed of in accordance with the agent's instructions.

1. Shooting

Since badgers are nocturnal and nomadic, shooting usually is not an effective method of removal. If badgers are unusually active in a large golf course or cemetery they can sometimes be spot-lighted and shot at night. Permission for the use of an artificial light should be obtained from the local Conservation Agent.



2. Fumigants

Fumigants, such as gas cartridges, are not an effective method of removal because badgers are usually not located in the burrow. However, the use of fumigants to remove prey species, such as ground squirrel colonies, can effectively reduce badger occurrence. Gas cartridges are usually available at local garden centers and farm supply stores.

3. Trapping

Trapping with foot-hold traps is the **most effective** method of controlling most badger problems. Live traps are not an effective tool; body grip traps are not legal when set on dry land in Missouri because of the possibility of injury to non-target animals.

Badgers are often caught by coyote trappers using conventional dirt hole or flat sets. While coyote sets scented with coyote lure are effective for badgers, they are not the best trap set because of the likelihood of catching non-target animals. Also, these types of sets require considerable maintenance.



Typical badger burrow with a large amount of dirt at entrance. Since most animals do not use badger burrows, traps set here/there are fairly species selective.

The best trap set for badgers is made right at the burrows the badgers have dug. Badgers typically dig several burrows in areas where they are active. They periodically revisit these burrows and may clean them out or dig new ones. This trait makes them vulnerable to trapping at the burrows. Since most animals do not use badger burrows, traps set there are fairly species selective.

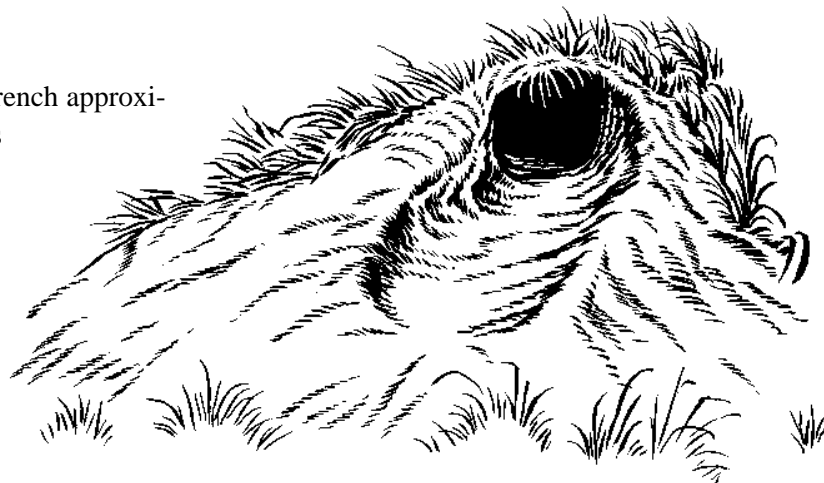
wide extending into the hole. The trench is dug for two purposes: (1) it will appear to the badger that another badger is encroaching on its territory and will investigate the area where the trap is set, and (2) the trench creates a flat place in which to set the trap. The trap should be set as far down in the hole as possible to prevent non-target catches.

Step 1

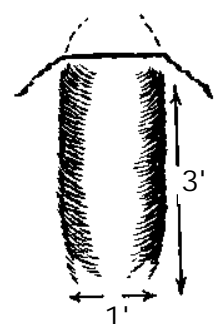
At the burrow entrance, dig a trench approximately 3 feet long by 12 inches

Step 1

At the entrance a trench is dug 3' long by 1' wide.



Aerial view

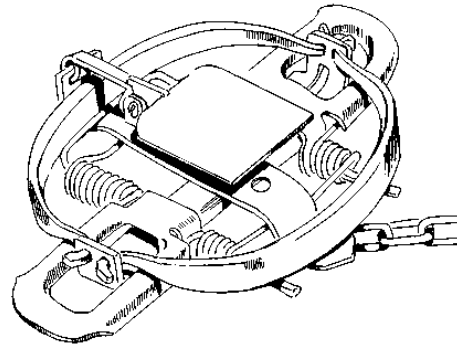


Step 2

The choice of traps is important because badgers are powerful animals. Larger traps in size #3 are best for badger trapping. Rusted out weak traps or small single spring traps are unsuitable. Traps can be purchased locally or at cost from the Missouri Department of Conservation through the Wildlife Damage Biologist. One to three traps is usually enough.

Step 3

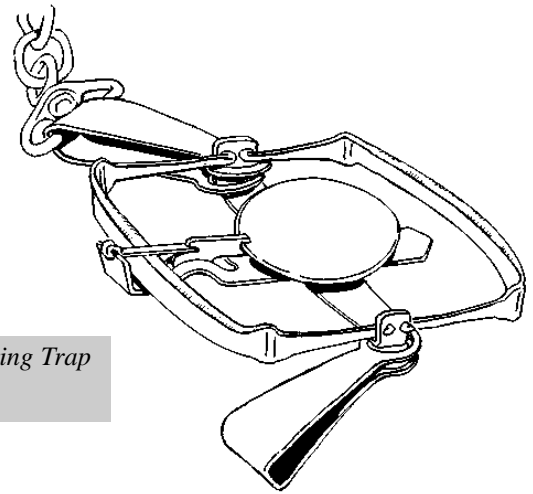
It is important to wire the trap to a heavy “drag” object such as a wooden fence post at least 8 inches in diameter by 6 feet long. A drag is better than attaching the trap to a stationary object which often causes the badger to dig itself into a burrow. To attach the trap to the drag use several strands of smaller gauge wire rather than one strand of larger wire that could break when the animal struggles to get free. Four strands of tie wire (about the same gauge as baling wire) work well when twisted together to form a cable. Several feet of the wire cable should be used to reach from the drag into the entrance of the burrow. The twisted wire strands should be tied securely around the middle of the drag. Use a sturdy object for a drag so it will not break and allow the badger to escape with the trap.



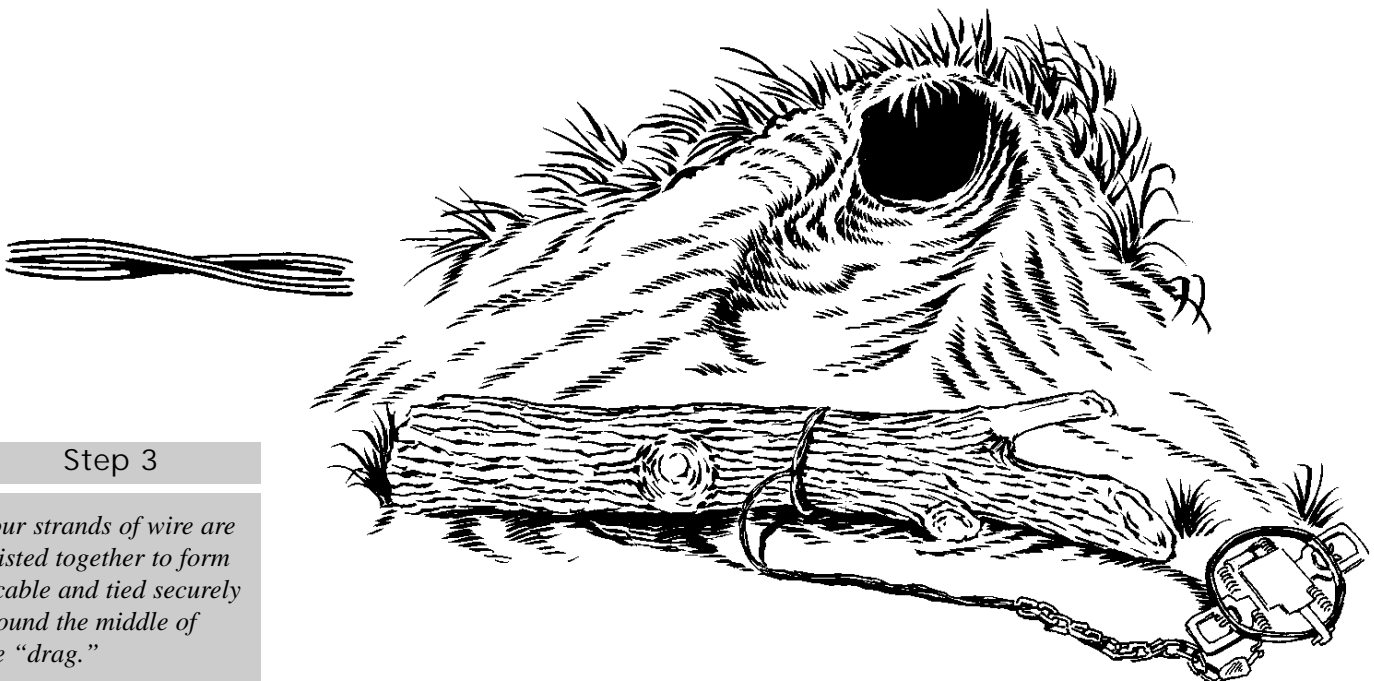
*Coil Spring Trap
Size #3*

Step 2

*Larger foot hold traps
in the size #3 are best
for badger trapping.*



*Long Spring Trap
Size #3*

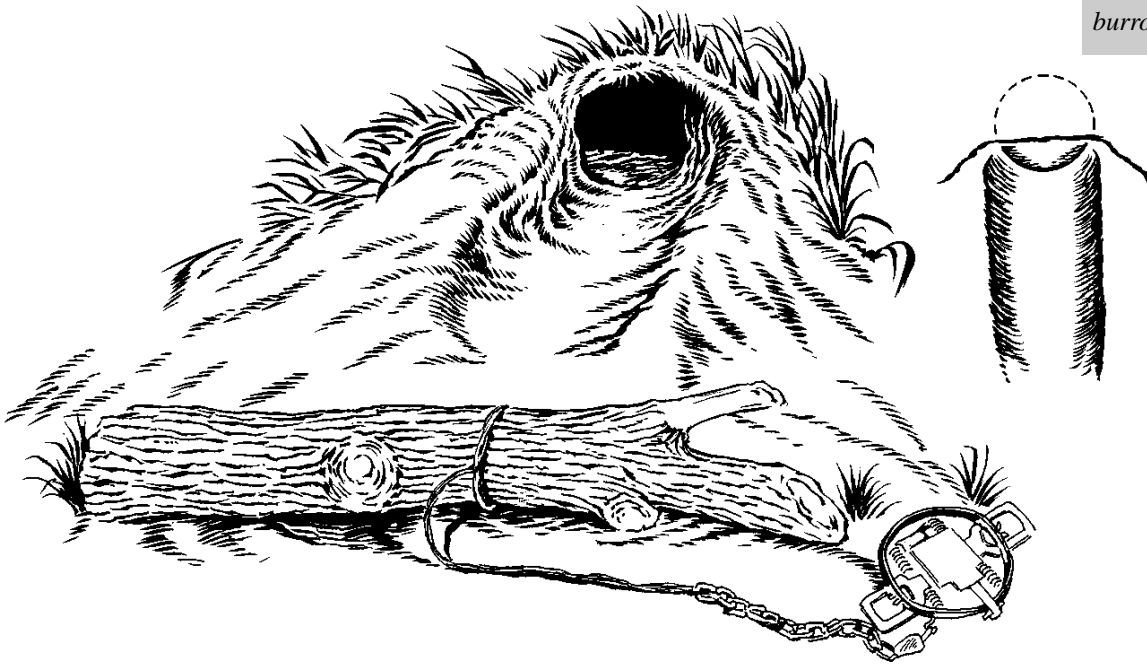


Step 3

*Four strands of wire are
twisted together to form
a cable and tied securely
around the middle of
the “drag.”*

Step 4

Make a shallow excavation inside the entrance of the burrow.



Step 4

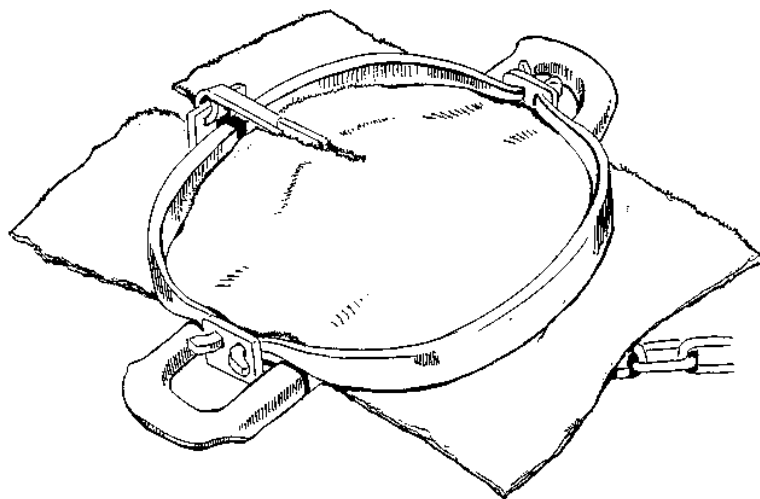
Place the drag below the mound of dirt near the burrow. Fasten one end of the wire cable securely to the drag and the other end to the trap. Form a shallow excavation for the trap inside the entrance of the burrow in the prepared trench. The excavation should be at the end of the trench just before the burrow entrance drops off to a downward slope.

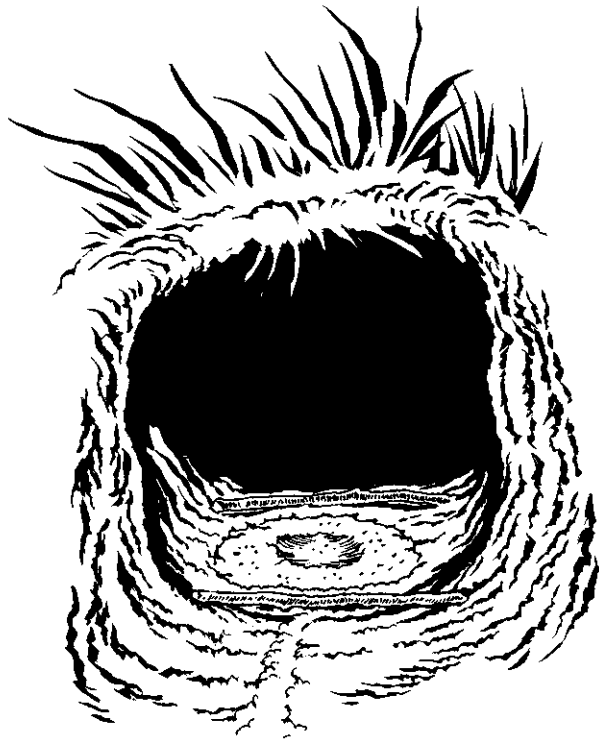
Step 5

The trap pan should be covered to prevent dirt from getting under the pan. For pan covers, use clean denim or similar material cut wide enough to fit between the jaws where they hinge, and long enough to extend an inch or more beyond and below the jaws. On one end of the pan cover, cut a slit 3 inches long. Place the pan cover over the trap pan and under the jaws; the slit side of the pan cover will accommodate the trigger mechanism. Pan covers for size #3 traps are 5 1/4 inches x 7 inches.

Step 5

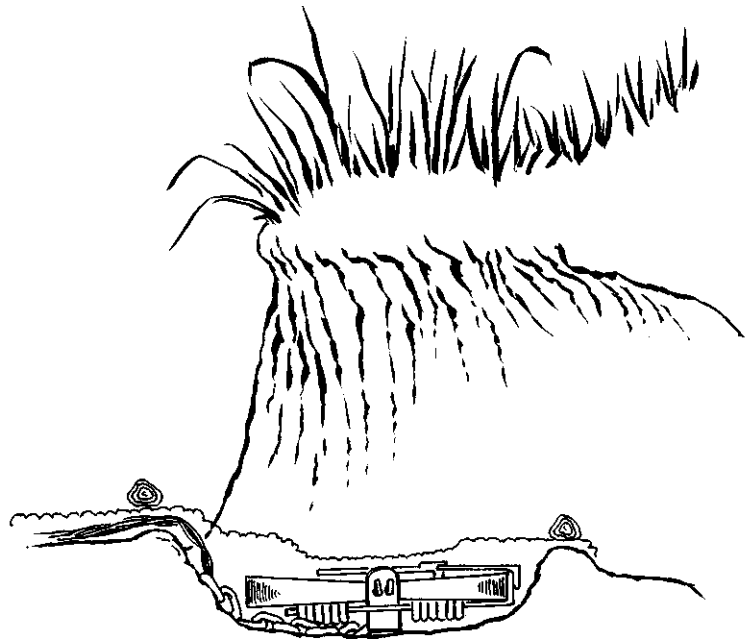
Pan cover is 5 1/4 by 7" with a 3 inch long slit to accommodate the trigger mechanism and prevents dirt from getting under the pan.





Step 6

Trap is placed in shallow excavation with dirt packed around the outside of the trap jaws to hold the pan cover in place. Then sprinkle it with a fine layer of dirt.



Note the slight depression over the pan, stepping sticks and stair effect of the trap set-up.

Step 6

The trap can now be placed in the excavation. Make certain any wrinkles are smoothed out of the pan cover. Pack loose dirt around the outside of the trap jaws to hold the pan cover in place. The trap should be firmly bedded in a little below the surface of the set.

Finally, sprinkle a layer of fine dirt over the trap until covered. Use a small stick to smooth out and level the dirt over the trap to a depth of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Finish by making a slight depression just over the trap pan. If desired, a small stick 6 inches long and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter can

be placed in front and behind the buried trap. These “stepping sticks” cause the animal to step over the stick and into the trap. Bury the wire cable leading from the trap to the drag.

Check the traps daily in accordance with the wild life regulations to ensure that non-target animals are released quickly.

This trap set, plus patience and persistence, is an effective way to catch badgers.

Notes